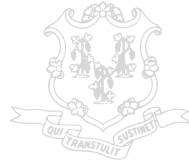


OFFICE OF LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH
PUBLIC ACT SUMMARY



PA 11-136—sHB 6499

Education Committee

Appropriations Committee

**AN ACT CONCERNING MINOR REVISIONS TO THE EDUCATION
STATUTES**

SUMMARY: This act makes various changes in the education statutes. It:

1. reclassifies American Sign Language as a world language and eliminates signed English from public school instruction offering options;
2. adds genocide education and awareness to the subjects for which the State Board of Education (SBE) must provide curriculum materials and encourage school districts to offer in courses for students and in-service training for certified personnel;
3. allows the education commissioner, at a school board's request, to permit an otherwise qualified teacher with an elementary education endorsement to teach a specialized subject in a kindergarten-through-grade-eight (K-8) school;
4. changes the schedules for filing various education-related reports, generally requiring them to be filed less frequently;
5. eliminates a statutory deadline for school districts participating in the school breakfast program to file expenditure reports and requires districts that use their grants for unauthorized purposes to repay the state;
6. gives school districts an extra month to notify nontenured teachers that their contracts for the following school year will not be renewed;
7. allows school superintendents or their designees to access the state's public school information system to obtain mastery test information about individual students enrolled in or transferring to their districts;
8. requires school districts to take additional measures to address truancy and to report annually on their truancy reduction activities;
9. requires SBE to adopt uniform definitions of excused and unexcused absences for districts to use in implementing required truancy policies and filing truancy data reports; and
10. expands the types of courses school districts may offer to meet an existing requirement that they offer an advanced placement (AP) course program that allows students to earn college credit in high school.

The act also makes technical changes (§§ 13, 19, and 20).

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2011, except for the provision on AP course programs and the technical changes, which are effective on passage.

**§ 1 & 2 — INSTRUCTIONAL PROGRAMS AND TEACHER IN-SERVICE
TRAINING**

§ 1 — American Sign Language

The law specifies the subjects public schools must offer. They include language arts and, at least on the secondary level, one or more foreign languages. The act (1) changes the term “foreign language” to “world language,” (2) classifies American Sign Language as a world language instead of as an optional offering within language arts, and (3) eliminates signed English as an optional offering.

American Sign Language is a complete language with its own syntax that employs hand signs and other movements, including facial expressions and body postures. Signed English is a form of sign language based on English and uses English syntax.

§§ 1 & 2 — Genocide Education and Awareness

The act requires the SBE, within available appropriations and resource materials, to make curriculum and other materials on genocide education and awareness available to, and encourage its inclusion in, school districts’ (1) instructional programs for students and (2) in-service training programs for certified teachers, administrators, and other pupil personnel.

§ 3 — WAIVER OF CERTIFICATION ENDORSEMENT LIMITATION

The act authorizes the education commissioner, at a school board’s request, to allow a certified teacher who holds an elementary education endorsement to teach a specialized course, such as computer and information technology, in a K-8 school in the district. The teacher must be otherwise qualified to teach the specialized course and must be employed in the K-8 school by the school board making the request.

An elementary education endorsement covers kindergarten through grade six. Endorsements for grades six-12 authorize a teacher to teach a particular subject. There is no K-8 endorsement.

§§ 4-11 — REPORTING SCHEDULES AND DEADLINES

The act changes the schedules and filing dates for various statutorily required education reports to, in general, reduce their filing frequency.

§ 4 — After-School Program Reports

Starting with the 2011 report, the act changes the submission deadline, from October 1 to December 1, for a biennial report from the State Department of Education (SDE) to the Education Committee on performance outcomes for entities receiving after-school program grants. The report must include measurements of the programs’ impact on student achievement, attendance, and behavior.

§§ 5 & 6 — Youth Service Bureau Reports

Starting with the report due by December 1, 2011, the act changes, from

annual to biennial, the schedule for SDE to submit to the General Assembly a report on diverting children from the juvenile justice and court systems to youth service bureaus. By law, the report must include the number of times any child is diverted, the number of children diverted, the types of services provided, the ages of the children diverted, and other statistical information as requested.

§ 7 — Charter School Reports

The act changes, from annual to biennial, the schedule for the education commissioner, within available appropriations, to submit to the Education Committee a report on the operations of charter schools, including recommendations for statutory changes to facilitate expanding their number, a compilation of the schools' strategic profiles, an assessment of the adequacy of state funding for such schools, and the adequacy and availability of suitable facilities for them. The act requires the commissioner to start submitting the biennial reports by January 1, 2012. Prior law did not specify a reporting deadline.

§§ 8 & 9 — School Readiness Reports

The act changes the schedule, from twice a year to once every two years, for local school readiness councils' reports to SDE on (1) the number and location of school readiness spaces and estimates of future needs; (2) the need for school readiness programs and the number of children not being served; and (3) for priority school districts, the number of children not being served and the estimated cost of serving those children. It also changes SDE's schedule for reporting a summary of the local reports to the Education Committee from annual to biennial. The first biennial report to the committee is due by December 15, 2012.

§ 10 — School Facilities Report

Starting July 1, 2011, the act changes, from biennial to triennial, the schedule for school districts to report to the education commissioner and the commissioner to the Education Committee on the condition of school facilities and actions taken to implement each district's long-term school building, indoor air quality, and green cleaning programs.

§ 11 — School Paraprofessional Advisory Council Reports

The act reduces, from at least quarterly to annually, the schedule for the School Paraprofessional Advisory Council to advise the education commissioner of, and report to the Education Committee on, training needs and the effectiveness of the content and delivery of training for school paraprofessionals. It also requires the council to meet quarterly.

§ 12 — SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM GRANTS

The act requires school districts to repay school breakfast program grant funds not spent for allowable purposes. Prior law gave the education commissioner discretion over whether to require repayment. It also requires school districts

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participating in the program to file financial statements of their expenditures annually and in a manner the commissioner requires rather than by September 1 of the fiscal year following the year the district participated.

§ 14 — NOTICE TO NONTENURED TEACHERS OF CONTRACT NONRENEWAL

The act delays, from April 1 to May 1, the annual deadline for school districts to notify teachers who do not have tenure that their contracts will not be renewed for the following year. By law, unless it terminates a nontenured teacher for cause, a school district must continue the teacher's contract for the following year if it fails to notify him or her in writing of nonrenewal by the statutory deadline.

§ 15 — PUBLIC SCHOOL INFORMATION SYSTEM ACCESS

The act requires the education commissioner to give school superintendents or their designees access to students' mastery test information in the state's public school information system. The access must be limited to determining examination dates, scores, and levels of achievement only for those students enrolled in or transferring into a superintendent's school district. The act applies to statewide mastery tests administered in grades three through eight and the 10th grade Connecticut Academic Performance Test.

§§ 16-18 — TRUANCY POLICIES

§ 16 — Additional Requirements for School Districts

By law, each school board must adopt policies and procedures for dealing with truants that include certain specific actions. Among these are that (1) school personnel or volunteers under their direction make a reasonable effort to notify parents by phone when their child fails to appear for school and there is no indication that the parent knows of the child's absence; (2) school officials meet with a child's parents within 10 school days after the child's fourth unexcused absence in a month or 10th in a school year; and (3) when a parent does not attend the required meeting or otherwise fails to cooperate in addressing the truancy, the superintendent of schools file a written complaint with the Superior Court alleging that the child's family is a Family With Service Needs (FWSN) (see BACKGROUND).

The act requires:

1. school personnel or volunteers to notify the parent of a child's absence by mail as well as by phone,
2. the mailed notice to warn that two unexcused absences in a month or five in a year could lead the school superintendent to file a FWSN complaint, and
3. the superintendent to file a FWSN complaint within 15 days after a parent fails to attend the meeting with school officials or otherwise fails to cooperate in addressing his or her child's school absences. Prior law imposed no deadline for filing the FWSN complaint.

§ 17 — Information on Truancy Reduction Activity

By law, superintendents must include truancy data in the school and school district profiles they must submit to SDE each year. The act also requires superintendents to include, in the narrative part of the profiles, a description of their school board's actions to reduce truancy.

§ 18 — Excused and Unexcused Absences

By July 1, 2012, the act requires the SBE to define an “excused” and “unexcused” absence and requires school boards to use the definitions to (1) report required truancy data on school profiles and (2) implement required truancy policies and procedures. There was formerly no requirement for a uniform statewide definition of these terms.

§ 21 — ADVANCED PLACEMENT COURSES

The act allows school districts to choose additional types of programs to meet an existing state requirement that, starting in the 2011-12 school year, they offer an “advanced placement course program” that allows students to earn college credit in high school. Under prior law, districts could offer only advanced placement (AP) courses for which the College Board offers an AP examination. Under the act, they may provide any high school course, including those for which AP exams are available, that (1) offers college- or university-level instruction for which students may earn college credit and (2) is approved by the SBE.

BACKGROUND

Family With Service Needs (FWSN)

A FWSN complaint may be filed with the Superior Court when a child under age 17 runs away without good cause, is truant or beyond control of his or her parents or school authorities, or engages in certain forms of sexual or immoral conduct. The complaint must be referred to a juvenile probation officer who investigates and recommends that the child receive a program of services through the court.

OLR Tracking: JSL:RC:df